

## **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS OF GROUPS AND GENERAL DISPENSATION FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To report details of the revised membership of the political Groups of the Council, together with the names of officers appointed within the Groups.
2. The report also proposes the approval of a general dispensation in relation to member attendance at Council meetings due to the COVID19 Coronavirus crisis.

#### **Information**

3. The Constitution requires the membership of political Groups of the Council and their Leader, Deputy Leader and Business Manager (officers of the Groups) to be noted at the Annual Meeting.
4. Regulation 4(2) of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (the Regulations) has now disapplied the requirement for such appointments to be made at an Annual Meeting, permitting them to be made at "such time as the Council may determine". Given that the previously scheduled Annual Meeting of the Council for 21 May 2020 was cancelled due to Coronavirus COVID19 emergency, this extraordinary meeting of Council has been called to consider some of the business ordinarily carried out at the Annual Meeting.
5. There are currently three political Groups on the Council, which are:-
  - the Nottinghamshire County Council Conservatives and Mansfield Independent Group
  - the Nottinghamshire County Council Labour Group
  - the Ashfield Independents Group
6. In addition to the three Groups detailed within this report, there are two non-aligned County Councillors who are not part of any political Group of the Council. These are Councillor Steve Carr (Liberal Democrats) and Councillor Maureen Dobson.
7. The membership of each Group is set out in Appendix A along with the officers of each Group (Leader, Deputy Leader and Business Manager).

8. Councillor John Knight is no longer a member of the Nottinghamshire County Council Labour Group and has joined the Nottinghamshire County Council Conservatives and Mansfield Independent Group. This means that the overall political balance of the Council is now as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Conservative and Mansfield Independent Group	36	54.55
Labour Group	22	33.33
Ashfield Independents Group	6	9.09
Liberal Democrat	1	1.52
Independent	1	1.52

9. There is a statutory requirement for seats on Committees and Sub-Committees to be allocated to the political groups in a way which reflects the overall balance of the Council. Details of these are dealt with elsewhere in the agenda.

10. The COVID19 coronavirus crisis has required a significant shift to the focus of Council activities as set out in the report to Policy Committee on 13 May 2020 - COVID-19: Nottinghamshire County Council Response. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and enabled several changes including allowing the Council to hold meetings remotely.

11. The published calendar of Council meetings is currently suspended, and meetings are only being held where decisions are required to be taken. This limits the opportunity for members to participate in Council meetings at the current time.

12. Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that “if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority.”

13. Therefore, it is proposed to issue a general dispensation to any member unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period of 6 months due to

- a) cancellation of meetings and/or
- b) reduced attendance at meetings at the request of political groups and/or
- c) shielding, self-isolation or hospitalisation and/or
- d) lack of or technical difficulties with appropriate computer or telephony facilities

relating to and during the subsistence of the COVID19 Coronavirus emergency and that all members so affected shall continue in their role as County Councillor for their areas, despite their non-attendance for such reasons.

### **Other Options Considered**

14. None, it is a requirement of the Constitution to report annually to Full Council and this may be at such a time as the Council may determine under the new Regulations.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

15. It is necessary for Council to note the political Groups on the Council and their Officers.
16. The general dispensation is proposed as some members will, through no fault of their own, be at risk of being removed from office due to non-attendance at a Council meeting as set out in Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the membership of the political groups be noted
- 2) That the Officers of the Groups be noted.
- 3) That the Council approves that a dispensation be granted to any County Councillor who is or will be unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period of 6 months due to:
  - a) cancellation of meetings and/or
  - b) reduced attendance at meetings at the request of political groups and/or
  - c) shielding, self-isolation or hospitalisation and/or
  - d) lack of or technical difficulties with appropriate computer or telephony facilities

relating to and during the subsistence of the COVID19 Coronavirus emergency and that all members so affected shall continue in their role as County Councillor for their areas, despite their non-attendance for such reasons.

**Anthony May**  
**Chief Executive**

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## **Constitutional Comments (HD 18/05/2020)**

18. Full Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out in the report

## **Financial Comments (CSB 18/05/2020)**

19. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report to Policy Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 - COVID-19: Nottinghamshire County Council Response
- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All